

Annotation: A critical close reading tool

What is annotating?

Annotating is the process of marking and taking notes **on a text** to make the most of the reading process. Usually this includes highlighting, underlining, circling, arrows, and notes in the form of paraphrasing, summary or original ideas.

Why annotate?

Whether you're annotating as an adult reader, as a teacher planning your close reading, or guiding your *students* to annotate, annotating is an important part of making meaning of text and a critical element of close reading. It serves to deepen comprehension by thinking beyond the words and it makes it easy to go back to the text to find important information or key moments. This supports Common Core instructional shifts such as close reading and writing-about-reading. As a teacher, it's not only important to help your students annotate, it is also critical that **you** annotate the texts you plan to teach as an early step in planning for close reading.

How do you annotate?

There are many approaches to annotating a text, but the key is that your annotations should go beyond noting the plot or the important facts and dig below the surface to reveal your observations about connections across the text, repeated themes, symbols, and words, questions that you still have, and the bigger points the author is trying to make. Here's one process that you may want to try:

- Read the text the first time through, noting unfamiliar or difficult words or concepts
- Reread the text many times, each time with a different lens. Depending on your purpose for reading, lenses you apply might include:
 - Important ideas, key understandings, big takeaways, deeper meaning, author's message
 - The development of ideas or arguments across a text
 - Relationships between ideas and elements in the text or story (characters, setting, plot, etc.)
 - Significant craft moves such as organization and structure, use of metaphor, imagery, symbolism, tone, and mood
 - Vocabulary and word choice
 - Use of rhyme or rhythm
 - Use of illustrations or other text features
 - The Common Core State Standards in your grade-level. Are there any standards that the text simply "screams" to teach?
- When reading longer texts, it's important to annotate across the text. Paraphrasing or summarizing key sections or chapters, jotting down what stands out, or even creating a new "title" for each chapter can help readers pick up the text later on and remember its meaning so far.
- Develop your own system of annotation that is meaningful to you. For example, check marks could indicate ideas or arguments you find particularly strong, stars could mark evidence, boxes or circles could indicate Tier 2 and Tier 3 vocabulary, exclamation points could note important or surprising moments, question marks highlight confusing places

What does annotating look like?

What annotation looks like can vary widely depending on the person and the text being annotated. For example, when reading poetry, annotation tends to be much more dense, whereas in longer texts, there may be less annotation. The bottom line, however, is that annotating a text is a personal process that reflects the individual reader's approach to making meaning of text. Some examples are included on the next few pages.

Examples of annotation (fiction)

1 Anna - 9th

The Tell-Tale Heart

By Edgar Allen Poe

Originally published in 1843

Most interesting =
- Untrustworthy narrator.
- Untrustworthy persuasion techniques.

Challenges
- complex sentence structure

TRUE?—nervous—very, very dreadfully nervous I had been and am; but why will you say that I am mad? The disease had sharpened my senses—not destroyed—not dulled them. Above all was the sense of hearing acute. I heard all things in the heaven and in the earth. I heard many things in hell. How, then, am I mad? Hearken! and observe how healthily—how calmly I can tell you the whole story.

It is impossible to say how first the idea entered my brain; but once conceived, it haunted me day and night. Object there was none. Passion there was none. I loved the old man. He had never wronged me. He had never given me insult. For his gold I had no desire. I think it was his eye! yes, it was this! He had the eye of a vulture—a pale blue eye, with a film over it. Whenever it fell upon me, my blood ran cold; and so by degrees—very gradually I made up my mind to take the life of the old man, and thus rid myself of the eye forever.

to this a true motive?

Now this is the point. You fancy me mad. Madmen know nothing. But you should have seen me. You should have seen how wisely I proceeded—with what caution—with what foresight—with what dissimulation I went to work! I was never kinder to the old man than during the whole week before I killed him. And every night, about midnight, I turned the latch of his door and opened it—oh so gently! And then, when I had made an opening sufficient for my head, I put in a dark lantern, all closed, closed, that no light shone out, and then I thrust in my head. Oh, you would have laughed to see how cunningly I thrust it in! I moved it slowly—very, very slowly; so that I might not disturb the old man's sleep. It took me an hour to place my whole head within the opening so far that I could see him as he lay upon his bed. Ha! would a madman have been so wise as this? And then, when my head was well in the room, I undid the lantern cautiously—oh, so cautiously—cautiously (for the hinges creaked)—I undid it just so much that a single thin ray fell upon the vulture eye. And this I did for seven long nights—every night just at midnight—but I found the eye always closed; and so it was impossible to do the work; for it was not the old man who vexed me, but his Evil Eye. And every morning, when the day broke, I went boldly into the chamber, and spoke courageously to him, calling him by name in a hearty tone, and inquiring how he has passed the night. So you see he would have been a very profound old man, indeed, to suspect that every night, just at twelve, I looked in upon him while he slept.

Defn. of word madman
the advantage that he uses to defend his sanity
the man's eye is Evil?
In trying to prove how uncrazy he is, his meticulousness proved his insanity.

Defn. essay prep?

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Examples of annotation (non fiction)

entrepreneur/inventor
-OR-
out of necessity?

seems like he doesn't have
money for traditional toys

Author provides this
to provide background
building. I should read
this.

TUESDAY, AUGUST 2, 2005

KidsPost

close knit community

My name is... Alex

KAREN, Kenya — Alex Muthuma is just 9 years old. But he can make his own toys.

Sometimes, Alex makes a ball out of rubber bands and plastic bags. Other times he and his 12-year-old sister, Yvonne, make cars from old wires and empty milk cartons.

"I like building things," said Alex, who wears jeans, a warm sweater and Velcro Harry Potter sneakers. "It's nice for playing."

Alex lives in a neighborhood outside Nairobi, the capital of Kenya, where he and his friends can find spare parts to almost anything.

His father has a refrigerator repair workshop in a one-room

store next to a busy road. Uncles and family friends work next to his dad in their own stores that sit in a row. They use iron and wood to make chairs, bed frames and sofas, all spread out in front of the stores for passersby to see.

*The children often help their fathers build things. Alex worked with his mom and dad until he started school last year. Children who don't go to school still are taught many skills by their parents. "My father is smart," Alex said in Swahili, the language of much of eastern Africa. "He taught me many things." Alex also speaks the language of his tribe, Kikuyu.

Inside Kenya

How many people: About 32 million. More than 40 percent of Kenyans are kids younger than 15.

How big is it: About 225,000 square miles, smaller than Texas.

Capital: Nairobi, Kenya's largest city.

Language: Swahili and English are the official languages. But many more, like Alex's tribal language, are spoken.

Economy: While less than 10 percent of the land can be used to grow crops, about 75 percent of Kenyans earn their living by farming. Droughts and flooding cause problems for farmers, many of whom are quite poor. Tourism is another big business, with people coming for safaris to see the country's wildlife.

Television: Kenya has 22 televisions for every 1,000 people. (There are 84 TVs for every 100 people in the United States.)

Fun facts: Nairobi National Park, home to zebras, lions, cheetahs, rhinos and lots of other wild animals, is within the boundaries of Kenya's capital city. Kenya is home to the world record holder in the marathon. Paul Tergat ran the 26.2 miles in 2 hours 4 minutes 55 seconds in September 2003. He did this despite taking a wrong turn during the race.

Both things might lead to be contributors and ingenuity

Maybe Kenyans hold a different definition than Americans.

seems like there is less emphasis on traditional schooling.

ZILLION

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Examples of annotation (non fiction)

grade

4 teachers "inside" this text? Some with simple background knowledge Some with no background knowledge

Play Ball!

America's National Pastime

Adapted by Kira Freed

From "America's Story" courtesy of the Library of Congress¹

America's Game

Crack! The sound of a baseball bat hitting a home run is one of the most familiar sounds of summer. Add cheering crowds, the smell of hotdogs, and the call of the peanut man, and you've got yourself a game! Baseball is just about as old as the United States itself. For over two **centuries** men, women, boys, and girls have played baseball in parks across the country. Although it may have **evolved** from an English game, baseball is now considered an American sport.

any not really grasp "English game vs. American sport"


Baseball's Beginnings

The game of baseball wasn't just thought-up out of thin air. Instead, it was likely based on an English game called "rounders" or "four-old-cat." Rounders had many of the same features as modern baseball. Gradually, as people played rounders, they began adding new rules and challenges, over time, the game had changed so much, it was an entirely new one. Today, the one major difference between baseball and rounders is that in rounders, a fielder can put a batter out by hitting him with the ball!

unfamiliar phrase

Did you know?

Baseball was even played by American soldiers during the Civil War.



This photograph, from 1859, shows the New York Knickerbocker baseball team. What do you notice about these players that is different from pictures you've seen of modern baseball teams? Is anything the same?

¹ <http://www.americaslibrary.gov/>

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Examples of annotation (poetry)

Four Skinny Trees

repetition in this section

isolated don't fit in misunderstood

They are the only ones who understand me. I am the only one who understands them. Four skinny trees with skinny necks and pointy elbows like mine. Four who do not belong here but are here. Four raggedy excuses planted by the city. From our room we can hear them, but Nenny just sleeps and doesn't appreciate these things. *? Why is Nenny mentioned here?*

The trees are

- skinny
- don't belong where they are
- raggedy excuses put there by someone

fierce angry determined

Their strength is secret. They send ferocious roots beneath the ground. They grow up and they grow down and grab the earth between their hairy toes and bite the sky with violent teeth and never quit their anger. This is how they keep.

Very visual! First and last sentence are simple and direct. Strong adjectives and verbs.

simile

Let one forget his reason for being, they'd all droop like tulips in a glass, each with their arms around the other. Keep, keep, keep, trees say when I sleep. They teach. *—pow!*

each keeps the others strong repetition & rhyme

Here's the "so what" I can picture that wall!

When I am too sad and too skinny to keep keeping, when I am a tiny thing against so many bricks, *then it is I look at trees.* When there is nothing left to look at on this street. Four who grew to despise concrete. Four who reach and do not forget to reach. Four whose only reason is to be and be.

"Four" repeated 3X

The trees

- grow to despise concrete
- reach
- know their reason